Montana Sage-grouse Council's Preliminary Draft Recommendations July 19, 2013

These recommendations apply to sage-grouse Core Areas (mapped by Fish, Wildlife and Parks) and General Habitat (all other areas currently mapped as within the distribution of sage-grouse). Outside of the currently mapped distribution of sage-grouse, avoidance stipulations and mitigation are not required, however minimizing the removal of sagebrush is recommended.

			FWP "STR.	AW DOG"		COUNCIL PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS										
THREAT	SUB-	CORI	CORE AREA		GENERAL HABITAT		CORE AREA	Λ	IM	PORTANT ARI CONNECTIVI		GENI	ERAL SAGE- HABITAT			
CATEGORY	CATEGORY	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²		
Human disturbance	Construction activities (seasonal restrictions)	March 1 – June 15 within 3.8 miles of active lek November 1 – February 29 in winter concentrati on areas	•		•Minimize activities within 3.8 miles of active lek between March 1 – June 15		•	•		•	•		•	•		
	Noise		•Limit to 20- 24 dBA measured at perimeter of lek from 6PM to 8AM between March 1 – May 15		Minimize noise levels to reduce disturbance potential		•	•		•	•		•	•		
Cumulative Impacts			• Limit cumulative surface disturbance to 3% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640		•Limit cumulative surface disturbance to 5% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/ 640		• Surface disturbance not to exceed 5% on average	•		•	•		Encourage use of general recommend ations (to be drafted)	•		

			FWP "STR	AW DOG"		COUNCIL PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS									
THREAT	SUB- CATEGORY	CORE AREA		GENERAL HABITAT			CORE AREA		IMPORTANT AREAS OF CONNECTIVITY			GENERAL SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT			
CATEGORY		Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	\mathbf{Avoid}^1	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	
			acres on average		acres on average										
Power Lines ³	High Voltage (≥100 kV)	NSO of 3.8 miles around active leks	• Locate within 0.6 miles of existing linear features • Subject to surface disturbance cap of 3% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	NSO of ≥1 mile around active leks	Use existing corridors when possible Subject to surface disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	Avoid or minimize/ mitigate	 Locate ≥ 4 miles from any active lek; Topographi c screening; Remove duplicative or nonfunction al lines Co-locate with roads, transmissio n lines, linear corridors 	• Offsite with high mitigation ratio • Bury existing powerlines	Avoid or minimize/ mitigate	•Locate ≥ 4 miles from any active lek; •Remove duplicative or nonfunction al lines •Co-locate with roads, transmissio n lines, linear corridors	 Offsite with moderate mitigation ratio; Bury existing powerlines. 	Avoid or minimize/ mitigate	•Locate ≥ 4 miles from any active lek; •Co-locate with roads, transmiss ion lines, linear corridors	 Offsite with moderate mitigation ratio; Bury existing powerlines. 	
	Low Voltage (<100 kV)	NSO of 3.8 miles around active leks	• Locate within 0.6 miles of existing linear features • Bury lines when possible • Subject to surface disturbance cap of 3% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	NSO of ≥1 mile around active leks	Use existing corridors when possible Bury lines when possible Subject to surface disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	Avoid or minimize/mitigate	 Install undergroun d; or Locate ≥ 4 miles from any active lek; Co-locate with roads, transmissio n lines, linear corridors. 		Avoid or minimize/ mitigate	•Co-locate with roads, transmissio n lines, linear corridors		Avoid or minimize/mitigate	•Co-locate with roads, transmiss ion lines, linear corridors		
	Service (<1,000 feet)	NSO of 3.8 miles around active leks	•Locate within 0.6 miles of	NSO of ≥1 mile around active leks	•Use existing corridors	Avoid or minimize/ mitigate	•Install undergroun d; or		Avoid or minimize/ mitigate			Avoid or minimize/ mitigate			

	SUB-		FWP "STR	AW DOG"		COUNCIL PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS									
THREAT		COR	CORE AREA		L HABITAT		CORE AREA	Λ	IMI	PORTANT ARI CONNECTIVI		GENI	ERAL SAGE- HABITAT		
CATEGORY	CATEGORY	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	\mathbf{Avoid}^1	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	
Pipelines	Pipeline and	NSO of 3.8	existing linear features • Bury lines when possible	NSO of	when possible Bury lines when possible	Avoid	•Locate ≥ 0.6 miles from any active lek. •Co-locate with roads, transmissio n lines, linear corridors •Bury	• Offsite with	Avoid	•Bury	• Offsite with		•Bury	• Offsite with	
Pipelines	associated compressor stations	miles around active leks	within 0.6 miles of existing linear features • Subject to surface disturbance cap of 3% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	≥1 mile around active leks	existing corridors when possible Subject to surface disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	Avoid	• Bury pipelines; • Restore disturbed area with native species • Co-locate with roads, transmissio n lines, linear corridors	high mitigation ratio Bury existing pipelines	Avoid	pipelines; •Restore disturbed area with native species •Co-locate with roads, transmissio n lines, linear corridors	moderate mitigation ratio Bury existing pipelines		• Bury pipelines; • Restore disturbed area with native species • Co-locate with roads, transmiss ion lines, linear corridors	 Offsite with moderate mitigation ratio Bury existing pipelines 	
Communicatio n towers		NSO of 3.8 miles around active leks	Subject to surface disturbance cap of 3% of suitable sage- grouse habitat/640 acres	NSO of ≥1 mile around active leks	Subject to surface disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage- grouse habitat/640 acres	Avoid	 Locate ≥ 4 miles from active leks Follow USFWS BMPs for tall structures 	• Offsite with high mitigation ratio	Avoid	 Locate ≥ 4 miles from active leks Follow USFWS BMPs for tall structures 	• Offsite with moderate mitigation ratio		•Locate ≥ 4 miles from active leks •Follow USFWS BMPs for tall structures	• Offsite with moderate mitigation ratio	
Wind energy	Towers and associated distribution stations	Avoid		NSO of ≥1 mile around active leks	Subject to surface disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage-	Avoid, but re- evaluate as new informatio	•	•	Avoid, but re-evaluate as new information becomes		•		•Locate ≥ 4 miles from active leks	•	

			FWP "STR	AW DOG"		COUNCIL PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS									
THREAT	SUB-	CORI	E AREA	GENERA	L HABITAT		CORE AREA	1	IM	PORTANT ARE CONNECTIVI		GENI	ERAL SAGE- HABITAT		
CATEGORY	CATEGORY	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	\mathbf{Avoid}^1	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	
					grouse habitat/sectio n	n becomes available			available				•Follow USFWS Wind Energy Guidance		
Mining	Coal	NSO of 3.8 miles around active leks	• Subject to surface disturbance cap of 3% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres section • Offsite mitigation with high mitigation ratio	NSO of ≥1 mile around active leks	• Subject to surface disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres		Coal mining operations will be allowed to continue under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamatio n Act	• Offsite with high mitigation ratio		•Coal mining operations will be allowed to continue under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamatio n Act	• Offsite with moderate mitigation ratio		•Coal mining operation s will be allowed to continue under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamat ion Act	•	
	All mining (coal, bentonite, etc.)	NSO of 3.8 miles around active leks	• Subject to surface disturbance cap of 3% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres • Offsite mitigation with high mitigation ratio	NSO of ≥1 mile around active leks	• Subject to surface disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	Avoid leasing in sage-grouse habitats until other suitable habitats can be restored to habitats used by sage-grouse	•Mining permits will include requirement s for offsite mitigation that enhances or promotes genetic diversity, critical habitat, connectivit y and population viability ⁴	• Offsite with high mitigation ratio		• Mining permits will include requirement s for offsite mitigation that enhances or promotes genetic diversity, critical habitat, connectivity and population viability ⁴	• Offsite with moderate mitigation ratio			•	
Oil and gas		NSO of 3.8 miles	• Subject to surface	NSO of ≥1 mile	• Subject to surface	No Surface	•Well pad densities	• Offsite with high		• Suspension of federal	• Offsite with moderate			•	

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THREAT	SUB- CATEGORY	COR	CORE AREA		L HABITAT		CORE AREA	1		PORTANT ARE CONNECTIVI		GEN	ERAL SAGE-(HABITAT		
CATEGORY		\mathbf{Avoid}^1	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	
		around active leks	disturbance cap of 3% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres • Offsite mitigation with high mitigation ratio	around active leks	disturbance cap of 5% of suitable sage-grouse habitat/640 acres	Occupanc y within 0.6 miles of occupied leks in core areas	not to exceed an average of 1 pad/640 acres (Cedar Creek Anticline core area exempted ⁵)	mitigation ratio • Require wildlife component in "wildcat" reclamation activities		and state leases in connectivit y corridors is encouraged where there is mutual agreement by the leasing agency and the operator	mitigation ratio				
Wildfire			Develop criteria for managing fuels and other risks to sage-grouse habitat to reduce the risk of critical habitat loss Re-vegetate burned sites within one year; emphasize native plant species		• Develop criteria for managing fuels and other risks to sage-grouse habitat to reduce the risk of critical habitat loss • Re-vegetate burned sites within one year; emphasize native plant species		• See Wildfire and Invasive species draft recommend ations	•		• See Wildfire and Invasive species draft recommend ations	•		See Wildfire and Invasive species draft recommend ations		
Invasive Species			• Implement pro-active weed managemen t • Reclamatio n should reestablish		• Implement pro-active weed managemen t • Reclamatio		•See Wildfire and Invasive species draft recommend ations	•		•See Wildfire and Invasive species draft recommend ations	•		See Wildfire and Invasive species draft recommend ations	•	

			FWP "STR	AW DOG"		COUNCIL PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS										
		COR	CORE AREA		GENERAL HABITAT		CORE ARE	Α	IM	PORTANT ARI		GENI	ERAL SAGE-			
THREAT CATEGORY	SUB-	COR	E TIKET	GENERA					CONNECTIVITY			HABITAT				
	ORY CATEGORY	CATEGORY	CATEGORY	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	Avoid ¹	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²	\mathbf{Avoid}^1	Minimize	Examples of Mitigation if Necessary ²
			native grasses, fobs and shrubs to achieve cover, species composition , and life form diversity commensur ate with the surrounding plant community • Operator required to control noxious and invasive weed species, including cheatgrass		n should reestablish native grasses, fobs and shrubs to achieve cover, species composition, and life form diversity commensur ate with the surrounding plant community Operator required to control noxious and invasive weed species, including cheatgrass											

Notes:

- 1. Exception: Projects may be built in Core Areas if the proponent demonstrates to MFWP (consistency review for Executive Order XX) that the project will not cause declines in sage grouse populations. This may be done through the use of co-location with existing facilities (need to define "co-location"), proof that the proposed disturbance area within a designated Core Area is not suitable (e.g. small parcels of unsuitable habitat within overall core area boundary), etc.
- 2. Mitigation plans are subject to approval by MFWP under a consistency review associated with Executive Order XX. These plans must be comprehensive and based on best available science. Measures of mitigation success, along with a monitoring plan, must be included in any mitigation plan. Mitigation success that allows for unambiguous protection of sage grouse populations must be demonstrated prior to authorization to proceed with project construction.

- 3. Roads, or other disturbance activities that result in removal of sagebrush or sage grouse habitat, are subject to disturbance density constraints.
- 4. DEQ has regulatory authority for mining permits and can require this stipulation as part of permitting process.
- 5. Cedar Creek Anticline core area will be managed as a sage-grouse restoration area because of the extensive development that already exists (i.e., impacts to sage-grouse will have already occurred).

Assumptions:

- 1. Localized categorization of habitat quality may factor into mitigation planning.
- 2. The cost of actions may be a consideration in the evaluation of whether avoidance or mitigation is the most effective at protection of sage grouse populations.